# VITAMIN Z

NIHAL ATSIZ

BERSERKER

BOOKS

# 1- THE WOMAN WITH THE SERIOUS FACE

The city of Hattusa was buzzing with joy. On this summer's day, the finest time of the year, a son had been born to the illustrious King Subbiluliyuma. The people of Hatti were celebrating the birth with wild revelry. The king's officers had mounted their chariots and raced off like the wind to deliver this glad tiding to every city.

The palace gardens were teeming with dignitaries. Banquet tables had been laid out, and princes, priests, commanders, viziers, merchants and ambassadors had gathered round the finest dishes. The gifts presented to the king were lined up at the palace gates, with palace guards standing guard before them.

Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil was walking amongst the tables in front of the palace, issuing orders to several officers following in his wake to ensure there was no confusion and that the arrivals were treated with respect. Short in stature, with a thick, curly beard and a stocky build, Tutaşil was a pure-blooded Hatti. He came from a very ancient and noble family. His first ancestor had worked alongside Pampa, the founder of the Hatti state Pampa, and all his ancestors had served the state with their blood as commanders. He was a very stern man. If the King did something inappropriate, only Tutaşil could tell him so. He knew no fatigue. Although it was nearing midnight, he had not sat down for a single moment. The young officers walking behind him were showing signs of weariness, yet he strode about as fresh and robust as if he had only just risen.

That night, a round, bright moon hung in the sky. To mark the birth of the King's son, the gods had made the sky cloudless, the breeze cool, and the moon bright. Everything was going according to plan. Yet Tutaşil was still dissatisfied. Indeed, no one had ever seen him satisfied even once…

In the midst of the banquet tables, the palace band was playing, entertaining the guests. After sending one or two of his officers to and fro, the Commander-in-Chief walked towards the far reaches of the garden with the aide-de-camp who remained by his side. Moving slowly, he began to survey the dense trees in that area. Opposite him, where the trees were at their densest, someone was standing. The aide pointed in that direction and said, 'Commander! There's someone over there.' Tutaşil looked carefully, then shrugged and replied, 'It must be Hantilyas. Come along. Let's go over and ask her what she's doing here.'

Hantilyas was the palace's enigmatic woman. Although she had been at the palace for years, no one knew what she did or who she was. To date, no one had ever seen her smile even once. Many people did not know her name; they referred to her as 'the woman with the unsmiling face'. Judging by her face, her eyes and her hair, she was a foreigner. The Commander-in-Chief did not like her precisely because she was a foreigner. For he despised anyone who was not a Hatti.

When Hantilyas heard two people approaching her, she turned her head and gazed at them with her usual sorrowful eyes, a look full of pain. This gaze did stir a sense of pity within the young aide. But the stern-natured Tutaşil did not think so. In a voice devoid of any softness or weakness, he asked:

- 'What are you doing here? Why don't you mingle with the crowd and enjoy yourself…'

The woman with the expressionless face seemed taken aback by these words:

- What's the point of having fun? I'd be better

off dead. Sparks of mockery flashed in

Tutaşil's voice:

- If you wish to die, no one is stopping you. The Hatti kingdom will not collapse because of your death. You know full well that in the palace cellars there are barrels of poison dating back to the time of King Muršil. Drink a bowlful of it and your wish will be granted!

Hantilyas did not reply. As was his custom, he looked at the two people before him with sorrowful eyes. Then, slowly, he walked away and vanished.

The Commander-in-Chief watched him go for a moment. Then, turning to his aide, he said in an angry voice: "We should lock up all the foreigners in the Hatti kingdom in the cellars and pour poison down their throats… What good is a half-mad Hantilyas?"

## 2- MAGICAL WATER

Dawn was breaking. The King of the Hatti had stepped out before the palace gates to receive the congratulations of his guests. First, the princes and princesses paid their respects. They prayed to the gods for long years, happiness and wealth for his newborn son. Then the Phrygian envoy arrived.

'Great King! I wish you and the Hittite people—our friends and brothers—health, long life and victory, in honour of your glorious ancestors. If you would deign to accept my heartfelt congratulations, you will leave me in a state of unforgettable joy,' he said.

Upon hearing these words, Tutaşil, the commander-in-chief standing nearby with the king's aides-de-camp, scowled:

- "You vile Phrygian! How dare you lie," he muttered. Just then, a crisp, ringing laugh echoed through the garden. All heads turned towards the sound, and before their astonished eyes, Hantilyas was seen walking towards the king with a smile. The commander-in-chief reached for his sword. Then, turning to his aide-de-camp, he commanded: 'Seize her.' He was the only one in the entire crowd who was not taken aback. For this woman, known throughout the palace—indeed, throughout the whole city of Hattusa—for her unsmiling countenance, to burst into laughter was such an unexpected sight that everyone froze in their tracks, having even forgotten that this was an act of contempt towards the king.

The aides-de-camp rushed forward to seize the woman they thought had gone mad. But the king shouted at them:

- 'Don't touch her! Let her come!'

Hantilyas approached the king, smiling. Her face was flushed, her eyes soft. She had become so beautiful that she stirred desires in the king. She held out her hands to the king:

- Great King Subbiluliyuma! Should only the living celebrate the birth of your son? Look, even though I am dead, I have come to congratulate you. Are not the dead prior to the living?

These words, followed by another burst of laughter, sent a shiver down the spines of many present. Here was this woman, fearless of death as if she were truly dead, laughing unconcernedly in the king's presence and speaking to him on familiar terms. 'I am dead,' she said. Yet she walked and spoke just like the living.

The king's brows furrowed:

- 'What did you say? Are you dead? You were alive only last night. When did you die? Who killed you?'

Hantilyas let out another raucous laugh. Pointing to Tutaşil, who was staring at her with the sharpest of gazes, she said:

- 'Ask him! He told me, "If you die, the Hatti kingdom will not fall." He said, "Go and drink this poison from the palace cellars." I drank it and died. Now I congratulate you.'

The King looked at the Commander-in-Chief. Tutaşil's face had taken on a terrifying expression:

- "Yes! I advised him to drink the poison. Because he had said he wanted to die. But it seems he went mad before he died," he said.

The woman was still smiling:

- I drank from the goblets. I drank my fill. Soon the sun-god Ishtanus will welcome me to his table. Would you not like to come with me? Everything has become beautiful since I died. O glorious King Subbiluliyuma! Even you, with your huge nose and squinting eye, now look pleasing to me!

An icy silence fell over the room. Only Hantilyas's laughter rang out,

everyone was staring straight ahead. The king, in an angry voice, ordered the commander-in-chief, 'Bring this woman to the palace at once,' then turned away. He strode off quickly and disappeared inside.

Tutaşil pounced on Hantilyas like a tiger. Grabbing him by the arm, he snapped:

- 'Move, you clown!... I'll make you answer for this insolence,' he shouted. Paying no heed to her laughter or her words, he dragged her towards the palace. The aides, their tongues tied with astonishment, trailed a little behind.

With the King in front and the others behind, they were heading for the dungeon. Since becoming King, he had only entered this place once before. That had been to see what was happening in the palace. When they entered the dungeon, Hantilyas was still laughing. Hidden away in a corner, the barrels had been waiting there for centuries, containing their dreadful poison.

The King turned to the woman and shouted:

- 'Which one did you drink from? How did you drink it?'

Hantilyas picked up a copper bowl that had rolled onto the floor. Approaching a barrel whose lid had been lifted, she said:

- 'I drank from this, O glorious King! I am drinking this one for you too,' she said. She dipped the bowl into the cask. Bringing the bowl, now filled with red, frothy liquid, to her lips, she drank it down to the very last drop before the astonished eyes of the King, the commander-in-chief and the aides-de-camp. They were

to collapse and die immediately. Yet she showed no sign of dying. She was laughing, though she staggered as she walked. The king asked:

- 'Tell me, Hantilyas! How many bowls have you drunk?'

- 'I've drunk three cups… Five cups… Ten cups since midnight… Won't you have some of this sweet poison too, King?'

The King and the commander-in-chief exchanged glances. Hantilyas had dipped his cup once more and was drinking the crimson liquid. The King turned to one of his aides: 'Bring a few prisoners here,' he said. This crimson liquid, which had been stored in the dungeon for centuries and was known to kill a man instantly if even a single drop touched his skin, let alone his mouth, apparently was not killing him

The king gave an order to the aide, who returned with three prisoners in tow. "Let them each drink a cup of this drink."

The aide, looking somewhat hesitant, dipped the bowl into the cask and handed it to one of the prisoners. The prisoner, who seemed to have no idea what was happening and looked utterly weary of life, took the bowl as if he were parched. He drank it as though with pleasure. The second prisoner grimaced. The third, however, smiled after drinking it.

By the King's command, the prisoners were each given another bowl. The King, the commander-in-chief and the aides-de-camp were astonished. For they, too, had begun to laugh and burst into fits of laughter, just like Hantilyas, even though they were about to die. They were no longer waiting for the King's command or for the aide-de-camp to hand them a bowl. Snatching the bowls from one another's hands, they plunged them into the barrel, pouring the crimson liquid over themselves as they struggled to drink it. Hantilyas, meanwhile, watched them, roaring with laughter, and shouted at them to drink even more.

The king was utterly bewildered. What had happened to this poison, of which even a single drop was said to be fatal? Or would those who drank it die later? Just then, one of the captives collapsed to the ground, which seemed to dispel his doubts. However, when the aide-de-camp bent over the fallen man and listened to his heartbeat and breathing, saying, 'He is alive, but asleep,' it completely confused the King's mind. A fierce curiosity had taken hold of the King. Suddenly turning to Tutaşil, he asked:

- 'Do you know of anyone who has died after drinking this poison?'

- No!

The King turned to the aide:

- What about you?

- No!

- I don't know either. So who does know? Could this be nothing more than an empty rumour?

He then ordered one of the aides:

- 'Fill this cup and bring it here!'

The aide brought the bowl. The King raised it slowly to his lips, took a sip, then handed it to the commander-in-chief, saying:

- "Taste it. This doesn't taste like poison. Would poison ever taste this good?" he said.

Tutaşil took the cup the king had given him. With the habit born of having faced death throughout his life and of not fearing it, he drank it in one gulp. Then he said:

- "It cannot be poison. It gives one a pleasant feeling inside," he said. They looked at one another for a moment. The prisoners and the Hantilyas were still laughing and joking. The commander-in-chief smiled:

- 'Great King! This is no poison. It is a magical water that brings a sense of relief and makes one laugh the more one drinks it. The fact that even this woman, who has never laughed in her life, has been overcome with joy after drinking it proves that this cannot be poison,' he said. Then, approaching the cask, he took another ladleful and drank it; and for the first time in his life, forgetting all law and custom, he burst out laughing in the king's presence.

The king's curiosity had grown even more. Snatching the bowl from Tutaşil's hand, he plunged it into the barrel. He poured the red liquid—which he had just tasted with fear and hesitation—into his mouth as if spilling it out. For a moment, he looked around hesitantly. He saw Hantilyas, leaning against a cask and laughing; the captive lying on the ground, puffing out his cheeks; the other two trying to wrestle whilst clinging to one another; the laughing commander-in-chief; and the aides staring like fools. He found it all rather amusing. His head was spinning a little. There was such a lightness inside him… And the woman opposite him was so beautiful… He couldn't help himself. Almost against his will, he let out a laugh too.

## 3- THE PHILOSOPHER WHO FOUND THE MEAN IN EVERYTHING

The philosopher Ilanasam had not left his house that day. He was writing a poem for the king. Although he was a philosopher, he did occasionally write poetry. His eyes sparkled with joy. However, this sparkle was not very noticeable. His eyebrows were so thick that they obscured the light in his eyes. With those thick eyebrows and that unattractive, deceitful face, he did not resemble a Hatti at all. He had come from Assyria; his father had been a vizier, and he himself had been born in Hattusa. He did not know the Assyrian language. He had been taught by Hatti teachers. He was a self-indulgent, lazy man. Yet he knew how to sell himself. Because his mother had fed him snake's eggs, he was very treacherous. He thought of no one but himself. Yet he was a renowned philosopher. He lived by finding a loophole in everything. His father had embezzled a great deal of money during his time as vizier. But Ilanasam was not satisfied with that alone. He wanted to be someone. He read the poem he had written on a large wooden tablet one last time:

O glorious, heroic king; the first among the

Hatti! You make all four corners of the world

tremble with the lightning of your sword.

You are the gold, the silver and the very essence of the land;

History has never seen a hero like you!

Your name strikes fear into the forty kingdoms of the world.

The apples of trembling Phrygia await your coming.

The beauties of Urartu sink into love as they think of

you; with a single glance, you slay the bloodthirsty

Kaskas. If not you, who will feed and sustain the Hatti

people? You are our father, our mother, and our very

being!

Drive Pharaoh's army from Amurru!

He is dead, you are alive; he is sick, you are well!

Truth be told, the poem had turned out rather beautifully. Who knows how the king would reward himself for this? Filled with the joy of this hope, just as he was about to call for his wife to bring some fried lizard, there was a knock at the door and one of the royal aides announced that the king was expecting him.

Ilanasam seemed pleased by this summons. Yet he could not deny feeling a sense of fear deep down. Nevertheless, he was certain that if he employed all his cunning, he could avert any dangers that might arise.

When he entered the king's presence, he found the commander-in-chief looking rather pensive. He greeted Subbiluliyuma with great respect. The king pointed to the crimson liquid filling the bowls before him and asked:

- 'Philosopher Ilânasam! Do you know what these are?'

The philosopher stepped forward and looked closely. He thought for a moment. He could not compare them to anything. However, as he felt it unbecoming of his high philosophical standing to say 'I do not know', he replied:

- 'Your Majesty! These are dyes,' he replied. The King smiled:
- 'Paint? But you said ten years ago that these were a dreadful poison. Have you forgotten? Remember the water that used to foam of its own accord in the barrels in the palace cellar? Well, this is that water… And now you call it paint.'
- 'Yes, Your Majesty! They are poison. But they are used as paint.'
- Could you drink this poison?

This question left Ilanasam flustered. He even staggered slightly. His mind was on the verge of spinning. Thankfully, his cunning came to his rescue once more:

- 'If Your Majesty commands it, I shall drink it. But… in that case…'
- What will happen then?
- The poem I began for Your Majesty will remain unfinished.

And without waiting for the King's reply, he took out the wooden tablet and presented it to the King. Subbiluliyum didn't really understand poetry. But as he was the King, he was obliged to appear to understand. After reading the poem, he asked:

- 'How much longer will this poem go on?'

The philosopher's eyes lit up:

- 'There will be five more pieces just like this!'

The king laughed:

- 'That's not very long… How long will it take to finish?'

- It took me a whole year just to write the piece I presented today. It will take at least another five years for the poem to be finished. Because every single word of a poem to be presented to His Majesty the King requires weeks of careful consideration. Especially if that king is our glorious King Subbiluliyuma…

These words filled Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil's eyes with rage. Through clenched teeth, he muttered:

- 'You Assyrian dog! How dare you lie,' he muttered.

Ilanasam's poem and words had made the king forget his true purpose. He said:

- Philosopher! Last night, Hantilyas and three prisoners drank these poisons that have been lying in the cellar for centuries. In fact, we drank them too, and nothing happened to us. There is something in this red water that makes one's head spin a little; it gives one a sense of joy. It tastes good too. Even Hantilyas, who had never laughed in his life, burst out laughing after drinking it. I, too, slept soundly for the first time in my life. Whereas every night, I used to lose sleep worrying about matters of state. I summoned you to tell us what this water is. I have also sent word to the scholars and poets of Hattuşaş. You must ponder this and uncover its nature.

Ilanas had put on his full air of cunning. He was on the verge of finding an answer. But just then, an aide-de-camp announced the arrival of the famous poet Irdas, who had come to pay his respects to the king.

# 4- THE DWARF ÐRDAS

Irdas, a rather comical creature with his dwarf-like stature and pot-bellied figure, caused a wave of laughter to sweep through the crowd as he greeted the king. Even Tutaşil, who looked upon him with disgust, could not help but bite his lip. He knew the lineage and history of everyone in the land of Hatti, and judged them accordingly. He knew how Irdas had made a living by stealing chickens in his youth. Later, he had become wealthy, ingratiated himself by writing panegyrics for this one and that, and had gained fame throughout the country. Back when he was stealing chickens, he had been a rather sly young man. After becoming a poet, he would walk with his brows furrowed and his lips pressed tightly together, trying to intimidate everyone with a pretentious air. But he had no idea how ridiculous he looked.

Pointing to the water in the stone basins, the King asked:

- 'Poet Irdas! Does the name of this water appear in your poems? Can you tell me what it is?' he asked.

The dwarf poet, waddling towards the bowls with his paunch protruding two spans ahead of him, examined them carefully. He said:

- Your Majesty! This is an enchanted water reserved for the bathing of kings and queens. The lives of kings who bathe in it become eternal, their realms powerful, and their armies invincible. For this water is mingled with the tears of Arinna, the Goddess of Heaven and Earth. Yes, Arinna… In one of my poems, I wrote the following about Arinna:

O Arinna, fairest of the goddesses… You

shower your light upon the eyes of my

heart.

This poet wishes to worship you a hundred

thousand times, Yet you soar high in the heavens

like a cloud.

There is surely a part of you in every woman, O

Arinna, the most glorious of the goddesses!...

The King suddenly cut the poet off:

- I did not summon you to recite poetry. I summoned you so that you might know what the water in the cup is. You did not know. This water has been drawn from the casks in the palace cellar

Irdas's colour drained from his face and his arms fell limp:

- 'Poison!…' he managed to say. The king was smiling.

- Come on then, poet! Drink from one of these bowls… You'll like it…

The dwarf poet leapt up with unexpected agility from his belly. Then, stammering, he asked:

- 'What do you command, Your Majesty? Shall I drink it? But then I shall die…'

The King smiled without replying. Irdas had lost his composure. He began to weep:

- Oh, Your Majesty! Then I'll die. I haven't had my fill of my youth yet. Command me to go and conquer the land of Phrygia on my own… Command me to do twenty somersaults right here… But I haven't had my fill of life yet…

Irdas had so many things to say. He could not say them. For he was so terrified that in the end he collapsed and fainted.

Seeing this, Tutaşil said in a voice loud enough for the King to hear:

- 'Look at the hero who's going to conquer the land of Phrygia all by himself. He thinks of Phrygia as a beehive and himself as a bear,' he said. The king was still smiling. He gave orders to his aides. They poured red water into Irdas's mouth to revive him. The poet first opened his eyes, then moved his lips as if trying to savour the taste of the water he'd swallowed. The bowl held by the aide must have taken his fancy, for he sat up to half his waist and drank it all in one gulp. However, when his eyes—still smiling—realised that the water he had drunk was poison drawn from the casks in the cellar, he let out a deep sigh and collapsed for a second time. Ilanasam said mockingly, 'He's fainted.' The Commander-in-Chief replied, 'Phrygia has been conquered.' The King turned to one of his aides and ordered him to summon the chief physician.

## 5- CHIEF PHYSICIAN ZIZA

Chief Physician Ziza was short-sighted. Upon entering through the door, mistaking the King for a figure in the distance, he bowed to the large candelabra. However, upon drawing nearer and realising his mistake, he asked the King to forgive him:

- 'My eyes grow weary from reading so much. I cannot see from a distance, Your Majesty. A candle illuminates its surroundings, but it cannot shine upon its own base. I cure everyone's ailments, but I cannot cure myself,' he said. The King asked:

- 'Chief Physician Ziza! Have you been reading tablets to strain your eyes so much?

- 'I have read four thousand tablets by now, Your Majesty!'

Tutaşil muttered angrily once more:

- 'He's lying, the dog. I've seen his house. He's got about a hundred tablets.'

The King had heard these words spoken right beside him. He asked Ziza:

- 'Since you've read four thousand tablets, you must know what this red water is. Have a look—what do you think it is?'

Physician Ziza lowered his eyes to the stones. He shifted his gaze from side to side, as if trying to recall the tablets he had read. Then, with joy, he said:

- "Yes, Your Majesty! These are the blood-stained tears of Kamruşepaş, the God of Health. They are a cure for all illnesses," he said. The King pointed to the dwarf Irdas lying on the ground:

- But as soon as Irdas drank some of it, he collapsed. We had told him that these had been taken from the barrels in the palace cellar.

At the mention of the barrels in the palace cellar, Ziza shuddered. Like all the people of Hattutaş, he knew that there were a number of barrels in this cellar he had never seen, and that a most dreadful poison

. In fact, if he was not mistaken, he had read somewhere that just two drops on a man's hand or one drop on his head would be enough to kill him.

The King asked:

- Chief Physician Ziza! Can you drink from one of these bowls?

Ziza's heart pounded with fear. But suddenly, feeling relieved, he replied:

- 'If it is Your Majesty's command, I shall drink it!'

What prompted Ziza—who was actually a rather cowardly man—to utter these brave words was the memory of a small box he kept hidden beneath his belt. Inside that box was an antidote capable of turning even the most potent poisons into milk. Ziza had not discovered this through his own medical knowledge, nor had he learnt it from books. His mother, an Indian Gypsy, had taught it to him as a secret. Tutaşil, too, was astonished to see this fearlessness. He simply could not understand how such a hard heart could be found in this deceitful and foreign fellow, born of an Indian Gypsy.

The King said:

- 'I admire your loyalty and courage. However, you did not recognise the nature of the red water. For this reason, it is necessary to convene a council. Tutaşil! Now tell the scribes: let letters be written to the kings of Assyria, Chaldea, Phrygia, Lydia, Kaska, Amurru, Egypt and all the other lands. Let them send their scholars here to determine the nature of this water. For the scholars who are to come, take a thousand silver shekels from the treasurer. Let capable officers set off quickly in their chariots to fetch the scholars.

Tutaşil was puzzled. He was staring at the king's face in bewilderment. He shouted at Subbiluliyum:

- 'What are you waiting for, Commander-in-Chief? Did you not understand my words?'

- I do understand, Your Majesty! However, I would like to clarify one point. Among the countries to which letters are to be sent, you also mentioned Kaska. How can this be? They are not only our greatest enemy, but also a very backward and uncivilised people. What sort of scholar could there possibly be among them? The thousand shekels sent to Kaska will have been sent in vain.

The King was angry:

- Do as I say. There are scholars there too.

Then he turned to Ziza:

- Chief Physician! Now you, too, must use all your skill to revive Irdas.

Having said this, he left the room. The Commander-in-Chief and the aides-de-camp followed him out. Only one aide-de-camp remained by Ziza's side. Ziza turned to him:

- Young aide! Would you bring me some water in large bowls to revive this poor fellow?

The aide dashed out. The Chief Physician bent down to look at Irdas, who lay on the floor like a lump of meat, and then began to mutter to himself:

- 'That animal of a man has found the time to faint. If only he'd died instead of fainting, then the gravediggers would have had to deal with you instead of me… Coward… And he goes and writes poetry to women, pretending to be a hero. I'd rather see you facing a field mouse than the enemy… Fool… Rotten-brained… Heartless… Good-for-nothing…'

Had the aide not arrived with the large bowls of water he'd loaded onto two palace guards, these curses would have gone on and on. The chief physician first splashed water on the unconscious man's neck. Then, lifting one of the bowls, he poured the water from it over his head. Irdas stirred. When he had the second bowl poured over his head as well, he opened his eyes fully and looked around. The Chief Physician helped him sit up and said:

- 'Ah, dear poet! I'm so glad you're all right,' he said. 'I used all my skill to save you. Rest assured, had any harm come to you, it would have pierced my heart. Is there anyone in the world like you—a refined poet, a heroic lion, a scholar of such sharp intellect? I shall offer a sacrifice to the gods. For a master such as you, the pride of the land of Hatti, has been saved.' I am saddened that I cannot stay by your side any longer. However, I have much work to do. The young aide will assist you. Farewell, my dear friend!

After uttering these words, Ziza hurriedly took his leave. Irdas had risen to his feet. After telling the aide 'no' when asked if he had any requests, and waiting for the aide and the two soldiers to move away, he felt himself over with his hands. He seemed unable quite to believe he was still alive. How was it that he had not died after that dreadful poison had been poured into his mouth? Could it really be that Doctor Ziza had saved him? He did not want to owe his life to that vile scoundrel. Nor had he expected such skill from him in the first place. When Irdas realised he was soaking wet, he pushed his thoughts aside. He would only have been this wet if he'd fallen into the palace garden's pond. Realising he couldn't stay in this state any longer, he began to walk, muttering: 'That scoundrel! He's boasting that he saved my life by pouring buckets of water over me.'

Meanwhile, the Philosopher Ilânasam, having found a way to avoid the danger of drinking the poison, had returned home and begun to eat his meal—consisting of large lizards fried in fresh sesame oil—with great appetite.

## 6- THE CONGRESS

Three months had passed. Scholars from near and far had come to Hattutaş. The wise and learned people from all the cities of the Hatti kingdom had also gathered in Hattutaş. They were all to hold a council to determine the nature of the red liquid that filled the barrels in the royal cellar and made people laugh when they drank it.

Among the Hatti scholars was Đkeznini, who had come from Kargamış. He was a well-read, highly educated, serious, mild-mannered and unassuming man. He knew the Assyrian and Phrygian languages as well as his own; he spoke Egyptian and Lydian; and he also understood Amurru, Hurrian and Kaska. He had travelled throughout all these lands, seen the royal libraries there, and read every single tablet. Once he had read something, it never left his mind.

On one of the mildest days of autumn, he convened a council in the great ceremonial hall of the royal palace. Subbiluliuma sat upon his gold-inlaid throne. Beside him was his favourite, Yamzu. This beauty from Hattusa, with her round face, long hair and plump figure like that of a moonfish, drew the gaze of the foreign scholars to herself. To the king's right sat the princes and princesses. To his left were the commander-in-chief Tutaşil, the priests, the court attendants and the viziers. Opposite him, the hall was filled with Hatti scholars on one side and foreign scholars on the other.

From his seat, the King delivered the following address:

- O Hittite scholars! O esteemed scholars of our friends, allies and brotherly nations! Before coming here, you all toured the palace cellar and saw the crimson water in the jars. Discover what this water—inherited from my ancestors—is, and why it was made. I

believe this to be something left by the gods. If you can prove that this is water bequeathed to my ancestors by the gods, I shall reward you. Then the doors of my treasury shall be opened to you.

The eyes of all the scholars, both local and foreign, except for Ikeznini, lit up. Ilanasam was the first to speak:

- Great King! Esteemed scholars! I beg forgiveness for speaking before anyone else. His Majesty's thoughts are most perceptive. Had these waters not been a gift from the gods to our king's noble ancestors, they would have been drunk and exhausted by now. For centuries, everyone believed this to be poison. For the gods, not wishing to let people come near it, had so inspired their hearts. Why, then, has it now become clear that this is not poison? Because the gods were reserving it for His Majesty, our King, the greatest of all kings.

Before Ilanasam had even finished speaking, a wild round of applause broke out. The scholars had greatly admired these words. The dwarf Irdas stood up to present himself to the king, clapping his hands as if stamping his feet. The king was pleased. Yet he remained composed, giving no sign of his joy.

The Egyptian scholar, who spoke second, greeted the king and then said:

- 'Esteemed scholars! I shall not speak at length, for there is no need for many words. Some time ago, I saw it written on a papyrus in Egypt. The Egyptian god Amonra and the Hittite gods had been discussing the matter of bestowing upon a king a gift of water that would bring joy to people's hearts, and they had debated at length as to which king this should be. Finally, they reached an agreement that it should be a most glorious king who would usher in a new era for humanity, and they had foreseen that this king would not only possess spiritual virtues but would also be exceptionally handsome and have almond-shaped eyes. This king, with his great generosity and sharp intellect, is His Majesty the glorious Subbiluliyum, who is hosting us here.

These words drew an even wilder round of applause than before. The dwarf Irdas was both applauding and gnawing at his own arm. At this rate, the reward promised by the king would go to the foreign scholars. Tutaşil, however, was dumbfounded with astonishment and exclaimed:

- 'Such flattery is unheard of. The fellow has turned our cross-eyed king into a man with almond-shaped eyes. I fear the king has believed it too. Now, if this dwarf Irdas were to stand up and call the king's nose—which is as big as a cucumber—a 'walnut-sized nose', I'd feel sick to my stomach; perhaps my heart would even stop," he thought. What the commander-in-chief had feared came to pass. Dwarf Irdas had taken the floor and, adopting a feigned air of seriousness, began to speak:

- 'I confirm everything that has been said so far. I, too, shall provide further evidence. Every month, on the first day, just before dawn, I have a dream. In this dream, the goddess Arinna descends from the heavens and, holding me tightly in her arms, says, "May our glorious king now accept our gift." At first, I did not understand what this meant. One night I asked what this gift was. She laughed. Clutching me tightly in her arms, she said, 'enchanted water'. You see, this water is a gift from the gods to our king, and Arinna, as the messenger of the gods, had entered my dreams month after month. Ah, the goddess Arinna! Look, this is what I said about her in one of my poems:

O Arinna, fairest of the goddesses! You
shower your light upon the eyes of my heart.
This poet wishes to worship you a hundred
thousand times, Yet you soar high like a cloud
There is surely a part of you in every woman, O
Arinna, the most glorious of the goddesses!
At the sight of your beauty I became a fool, O
Arinna, the most exalted of the goddesses!
Let all the honeybees be sacrificed for your
sake; with your love, all the unripe plums turn
red. Let all the egg yolks be your breakfast; if
I were to say, 'Take me too, eat me', perhaps
you would be angry.
There is surely a part of you in every woman; all the
Hattians must give their lives to you.
The colour of your eyes is found on a duck's
wing; for you I would shed the blood of a
hundred thousand men!...

When the dwarf Irdas finished his poem, amidst the ringing applause, he bowed towards King Tutaşil.

- 'Your Majesty! He's spilling the blood of a hundred thousand men, but why his own?' he asked. The King laughed and, whilst the applause still filled the room, gave the commander-in-chief this reply:

- 'My dear fellow, can't you see the man's frame? What blood does he have left to shed?'

Tutaşil's distant face seemed to smile slightly at these words. Now it was Physician Zizada's turn to speak:

- 'By the very nature of my profession, when I listen to people's hearts, look into their eyes, examine their heads, and measure their height, I immediately understand where their ailments lie, how old they are, which family they come from, which country they're from, who their mother is, and who their father is.' It has now been proven that this magical water, which is the reason for today's assembly, was bestowed upon our glorious king by the gods. Especially after the dream of the esteemed scholar Irdas, there remains no doubt whatsoever. I shall tell you of another remarkable property of this magical water. This water has become one of the greatest remedies in medicine. Whenever a man has a heavy heart, or a snake has slithered into his stomach, or a mosquito has flown into his nose, drinking a bowl of this magical water will be enough to cure him. However...

Yes, but not everyone may drink this water haphazardly or without due regard for custom. The finest and purest portion of this water is reserved for His Majesty the King and those of high standing whom he deems fit. The lower, less refined portions, however, belong to the common people. In light of the realisation of what this water truly is, I have a further proposal: from now on, the sedimentary portions of this water should be put up for sale to provide revenue for the treasury.

Once again, applause filled the hall. The dwarf Irdas rose to his feet once more, stamping his feet, eager to draw the King's attention. After the Chief Physician, all the local and foreign scholars took the floor and spoke at length. Their remarks differed in many respects; the sole point on which they agreed was that this magical water had been bestowed upon the King by the Gods. There was no one left to speak. The King was about to give the order to adjourn the assembly. Just then, Ikeznini, who had been seated at the very back and had fallen asleep whilst the last scholars were speaking, stood up. He was carrying several inscribed tablets under his arm. It was clear he knew nothing of court etiquette. He began speaking straight away:

- Good heavens! What a bunch of fools you are! You're saying that the water in His Majesty the King's cellar was sent by the gods. Could such a thing really be true? I've travelled all over the world and read every inscribed tablet. I've never seen anything like it. But there are things I have seen and know. Now I shall tell you about them. This so-called 'magical water' is simply a fine drink. They call it wine!..

At these words, a wave of grumbling and muttering swept through the room. Everyone looked at one another. The King and Yamzu exchanged strange glances. Yamzu was furious. Wasn't this rude man insulting the beloved King by denying the magical water sent by the gods? Unable to contain himself, he asked:

- What is this 'wine'? Would you please explain?

- Good heavens! Why are you in such a hurry? Of course I'll explain. The drink called wine is grape juice!..

At these words, the general astonishment reached its peak. Ikeznin was unaware of this. Even if he had been aware, he would not have cared. He continued:

- When King Muršil subjugated the entire land of Assuva 400 years ago, the Lydians agreed to send him a grape tax. One year, there was a bumper crop of grapes. As they were obliged by the treaty to hand over one-tenth of their own harvest, they filled five hundred casks with it and brought them by cart. Because there were so many grapes, everyone at court ate their fill. One night, King Muršil's wife burst from eating too many grapes. Upon this, Muršil banned the eating of grapes and had the high priest pray that anyone who ate them would be poisoned. When the high priest prayed, everyone grew afraid and, believing they would be poisoned, stopped eating grapes. The King exempted Lydia from the grape tax.

Priest Iduskam could not bear it any longer. He stood up and shouted:

- 'Why do you dare to mention the names of the priests? Foreigners like you ought not to speak the names of the blessed ones. You call this enchanted water "grapes". We know what grapes are. How is it that round grapes turn into water like this? Why are you lying in the King's presence?'

Ikeznin was not at all angry:

- Good heavens! Why are you getting so worked up, like a bunch of senile old women? I haven't even finished what I was saying... Back in King Mursil's day, there was a priest just as daft as you. He tried to curry favour with the king by beating the grapes. He pounded the grapes in all the barrels with a huge stick. Naturally, when he beat them with that stick, all the juice ran out of the grapes. If you were to take that much of a beating, even though you're a withered old man, you'd be drained dry too. Then lids were placed on top of those barrels. Over time, they turned into wine. That's how wine is made, after all.

Yamzu blurted out:

- All this sounds fine, but it needs to be proven!

- Come now! Would I say something I couldn't prove? There are two tablets in the library of the Lydian kings stating that these grapes were sent. It says we sent grapes by cart for the Hittite king Mursila. Since these Lydians were thick-headed lads, they couldn't say 'Mursil'. They say 'Mursila'. They could never bring themselves to call me 'Ikeznini' either; they used to say 'Ikazninya'. I had copies of those two tablets made for my own library. Here, look!…

As Ikeznini advanced to hand the two wooden tablets to Yamzu, he continued:

- In our kings' library, there are also bricks inscribed with the fact that a grape tax came from Lydia. They are written in the ancient Hittite language. It says that King Muršil's wife was poisoned. But that is not true. Because one cannot be poisoned by grapes. If you eat too many, you'll burst. I once ate too many in Lydia one night. I nearly burst...

Following Ikeznini's2 sharp remarks, an icy silence fell over the council at first. Then, the astonished scholars slowly came to their senses. King Subbiluliuma sat upon his throne,

staring fixedly at a single point, with a sullen expression on his face. His favourite, Yamzu, was glancing between the king and Ikeznini, growing angry and flushing. The first objection came from the dwarf Irdas.

- 'It cannot be,' he cried, 'how could such a thing happen? If this enchanted water were simply grape juice, would the god Arinna appear in my dreams every night to tell me it was set aside for our king, and hold me close in his arms?'

Đkeznini remained completely unperturbed:

- "Come now! If Arinna were to hold you in her arms, she'd squeeze the life out of you. Does the goddess Arinna have nothing better to do than to take a surly little dwarf like you into her arms? You must have seen and confused the Babylonian demon Aranni with the goddess Arinna. For the Babylonian demon is the protector of dwarves."

The dwarf Irdas felt faint. He had slumped down as if about to fall from where he was sitting. Yet, so as not to tarnish his bravery, he muttered, 'If I catch you out there, I'll beat you to a pulp.'

Yamzu's anger was growing by the minute. He felt a strong urge to teach this boorish man a lesson. After all, having been taking lessons for ten days to become a scholar, he was convinced that there was no one superior to him. With his large, portly frame, he was also superior to the scholars present. He began his speech harshly:

- 'Although he claims to be a scholar, he knows nothing. All the scholars here have said that this water was sent by the gods. He, however, called it grape juice. Would a scholar speak against the majority's opinion? A scholar knows that the word of the many is truer than that of the few. For strength lies in the many. Strength also means reason and knowledge. That being the case, by going against the general consensus, is he not exposing his own ignorance? Does one throw grain at the multitude?

The ceremonial hall began to resound with applause once more. Without so much as flinching, he waited for the noise to die down. Then, with his usual composure, he replied:

- Good heavens! What a narrow-minded woman you are!... Can the multitude constitute strength? If what you say were true, these fools here, simply because there are so many of them, ought to be stronger than His Majesty the King. The best and the essence of everything lies in the few. One man is superior to a hundred donkeys, one wise person to a hundred fools, and one scholar to a hundred ignoramuses.

Priest Iduskam leapt to his feet and shouted:

- What are you getting at? Are you trying to put yourself on a par with the King?

- Good heavens! What a daft fellow you are! Would I ever say such a thing?

A commotion had begun in the room. Amidst the clamour, one man said to the person next to him: 'He's really angry.' The other replied: 'No, he couldn't stop himself from laughing, but he was too shy to do so.'

It was not clear why the king had left. However, his absence had given the scholars great courage. All at once, they pounced on Ikeznini. The dwarf Irdas was shouting:

- Traitor to the fatherland! Your head must be cut off!…

Although Ilanasam wasn't saying anything explicitly, he was inciting some of the more hot-headed ones from the back to beat Ikeznini. Iduskam was clenching his fists, claiming he had insulted the gods, whilst Ziza was suggesting that his skin be flayed for showing disrespect to the king. Finally, their sense of honour boiled over. They pounced on him and began to beat him. Ikeznini paid no heed to the beating he was receiving. He was consumed by the desire to save his wooden tablets. For this reason, he did not retaliate against the falling fists and kicks; the tearing of his clothes meant nothing to him. Clutching the wooden tablets he had taken in both arms, he was trying to clear a path and throw himself out. However, when the others realised that the planks were the most valuable items, they began to attack them as well. They were yanking them from his arms and smashing them against his head. He still offered no defence. He had got quite close to the door. But when his last plank was snatched from his grasp and smashed to pieces, he flew into a rage. Taking refuge in Zamama, the God of War, he landed a slap on one of his attackers. The slap was so swift that the man who took it fell to the ground instantly. At the same time, those beating him hesitated and parted. The man who had been struck was Pilga, the second physician and brother of Chief Physician Ziza. Looking at the scholars facing Đkeznin, he said:

- 'Good heavens! What sort of men are you! I travelled the whole world for fourteen years to write these tablets. Now I shall have to travel for another fourteen years to rewrite them.'

Having said this, he began to walk away. Mounting his donkey, which was tethered at the far end of the palace gardens, he left Hattusa and set off along the road to Kargamish. After selling his house and belongings there, he mounted his donkey once more and headed for Egypt. Just as he had done before, he would once again set out from Egypt to travel the whole world, copying the tablets from the royal libraries.

# 7- THE SEER ŞILKA

The council, convened to determine the nature of the enchanted water, had been established by gathering scholars from across the world. After the gods had presented King Subbiluliuma with a thousand silver shekels—a sum intended for all the scholars—the assembly dispersed, and every scholar had received a thousand silver shekels. They were all satisfied. The Lydian scholar was the most delighted of all. For he knew that this enchanted water was derived from the grapes grown in his homeland. The king had also distributed large monetary rewards to the scholars among his own subjects and had granted them land in Hattutaş.

Whilst the foreign scholars set off to return to their homelands, the king's officers were also setting out to deliver a royal decree to Hatti: from now on, that red liquid was not to be called 'wine' but 'the enchanted water sent by the gods to the king'. This was because the rumours circulating at the assembly—that the liquid known as 'poison' in the king's cellar was in fact a drink called 'wine'—had quickly spread amongst the people, and the word 'wine' had begun to be on everyone's lips. Indeed, those who owned vineyards had even begun to attempt to make wine from their grapes.

The decree was conveyed throughout the entire country in a very short time. Despite this, everyone continued to call the grape juice 'wine'. Indeed, after drinking that water and feeling its effects, no one hesitated to call it 'wine' even in the presence of the king's officers, priests and judges. The strange thing was that even those in the king's palace referred to the enchanted water as 'wine' once evening fell. Indeed, even the king himself referred to the enchanted drink as 'wine' once evening fell.

Despite the king's decree, the most significant reason for the spread of the name 'wine' was the Seer Şilka. He did not practise divination or soothsaying, nor did he gaze at the stars. Yet the people still knew him as a seer. This was partly because, on one or two occasions, his predictions had come true… He lived in his hut on the outskirts of Hattuşaş, subsisting on the yield from his fields. He knew how to make wine from the grapes in his vineyard. He had a rather peculiar nature. He kept to himself, spoke to no one, and made friends with very few people. He used to say that people were like wolves; if a lamb appeared, it was a matter of luck. He was outspoken. He spoke his mind. He knew nothing of politeness. He had once been chief judge in the city of Ankova. He'd been dismissed from his post for sentencing a close associate of the king who'd been embezzling taxes. With the exception of one or two friends, he loved no one; indeed, he was repulsed by everyone. When they told him there was a gathering of scholars at the king's palace, he had replied, 'That's a gathering of madmen.' He used to call the king 'God's chief madman', Yamzu 'a cow in human form', and Ziza 'the spittle of the god of health'. To him, Ilanasam was a thinking dog, and the dwarf Irdas a talking hazelnut squirrel.

Towards evening, he would sit down with his wife Tubişka and their three-year-old son Murya and teach them. But what sort of lesson? He would often speak to his wife about the wickedness of women and their status as servants of the devil, and to prove his point, he would say: 'Just think! If the creature called a woman weren't so wicked, would the dwarf Irdas have been born of one of them? If women aren't wicked, what would you say about Yamzu, the king's favourite? Who knows what sort of spoiled milk he must have suckled for Ilanasam to have turned out so vile. In short, they are utterly wretched. What is the point of such wicked people living? There is no one good amongst women but you. All women apart from you should be put to death!…

He would also say the following to three-year-old Murya:

- Look here, my boy! You've grown into a fine young man. It's high time you came to your senses. Keep your wits about you and become a good man. Otherwise, just as Subbiluliyum changed the name of his wine, a second madman might set about changing the names of water and air, or decree that the leaves of the apple tree be eaten instead of its fruit—what would become of you then? I'm giving you all this advice; yet it doesn't even occur to you to go and slap that king. Even if you can't do anything else, can't you at least give that troublemaker, that scoundrel called Cice Irdas, a proper thrashing? That's it—everyone is no good… My only hope is in you. Everyone else should be cut down…

Of these words, it was wine and apples that stuck most firmly in little Murya's mind; he would repeat them wherever he happened to be. For he was a greedy child. He recognised apples and loved to eat them. He also understood that wine must be something to be eaten and drunk. Whenever anyone passed by their house, he'd shout 'wine' or 'apple', and so the word 'wine' spread far and wide. Everyone was rather amused by the sight of a little boy shouting a forbidden word so correctly.

One day, Sabba, one of the king's aides-de-camp, was passing by. Little Murya, who was sitting in front of the door eating an apple, pointed to it and shouted, 'Apple!' Then, as was his habit, he shouted 'Wine!' after it. Sabba was deeply loyal to the king. Although he was the son of a beggar, the king had taken him in, made him an aide-de-camp, and made him rich by granting him estates. He could not tolerate even a tiny child uttering a word that his beloved king had forbidden. Immediately, he charged at the child, shouting, 'You traitor to the king, you!'

Little Murya's father had raised him to be quite a fighter. Realising that a grown man was attacking him and that he was bound to be beaten, he immediately picked up a stone from the ground and brought it down on the aide Sabba's head.

Murya split the aide's forehead with the stone he threw. However, it was his father who paid the price for this. For when Sabba told the king of a traitor to the fatherland, a crowd of soldiers came to Şilka's house. They arrested him and threw him into prison to stand trial.

This was a momentous trial. For this reason, the most eminent judges had been selected. The court had been set up in the palace gardens, and many prominent citizens of Hattusa had gathered around. As Şilka had once been a judge himself, he paid no heed to this trial. 'I haven't had any fun for quite some time; this is a good opportunity,' he thought.

The chief judge asked Şilka in a stern voice:

- 'You are guilty, Şilka! Your son shouted at Sabba, the aide-de-camp, to bring him wine!'

Şilka replied:

- 'I didn't hear that. Ask my son!'
- 'Your son is only three years old. A child of that age cannot be punished. As his father, you will be held to account.'
- I will, but I don't see anything here that requires an explanation.
- Don't you know it's forbidden to say 'wine'?
- I do. But I also know that everyone still calls this drink 'wine'. In fact, I'm well aware that even you shouted 'wine' after drinking two bowls.

The Chief Justice's eyes widened:

- Good heavens! So you're slandering me, are you?
- What slander? If you like, let's ask your little son as well.
- Does the court run on the word of a little boy?
- It holds weight for me, so why not for you?
- I'm the judge!
- So what will you be next?
- I'll become a vizier.
- What will you be after that?
- Nothing at all!
- After you've struggled for a few more years, you'll end up as nothing. I'm already nothing as of today. So that means I'm superior to you.
- If this carries on, I'll have your head chopped off!

Şilka remained calm:

- Neither the truth that wine is wine, nor the truth that you are inferior to me, will change just because I have your head cut off.

- By deliberately teaching your son the name 'wine', you are contravening the king's law.

- And by saying that 'wine' is not wine, you are straying from the truth established by the gods.

- Mind your own business, you traitor to the fatherland!…

Shilka laughed. After staring intently at the Chief Justice's face, he replied in a firm voice:

- Not even in the palaces of the ancient kings could one find a sycophant as ridiculous as you. Is it you who calls me a traitor? Your father was a Lydian sewer-cleaner; your mother was an Egyptian slave. Your mother's mother was also a prostitute from Amurru. Even though you're a hundred per cent foreigner, you're calling a pure-blooded Hatti like me a traitor. A traitor to which homeland? Lydia's? Egypt's? Amurru's? I am the master of this homeland! You're calling me a traitor even though you're just a refugee here. Do you even know what a homeland is? A homeland is not bribes taken from criminals. A homeland is land taken by the swords of one's forefathers and defended with blood. Has anyone from your forefathers ever died for this land? I am under no obligation to answer you; let a judge of Hatti blood come to question me.

These unexpected answers had the effect of a bolt of lightning. Voices, grumbles and shouts rose from all sides. It was impossible to continue the trial. For Şilka was, in truth, no longer answering any questions. The Chief Judge was about to sentence him to death. But Tutaşil, who had been listening to the trial, intervened. Whatever he said, he said it. In the end, Şilka was acquitted. Only the entire harvest from his garden was confiscated and given as compensation to Sabba, the aide-de-camp who had been wounded on the forehead. Little Murya was left without diamonds for a season.

A few days later, a new royal decree announced that it was no longer forbidden to say the word 'wine'.

# 8- YAMZU WANTS TO BE QUEEN

King Subbiluliyuma had become thoroughly addicted to wine. He would wake from his nap around midday, attend to state affairs in a half-hearted manner, and by evening take his place at the wine table to drink with his viziers. By nightfall, they were all drunk, and with all sense of decorum gone, they behaved inappropriately.

When the King became drunk, he began to see himself as great and superior to the gods, bestowing titles upon those at his table. The next day, when he sobered up, he would sometimes revoke these titles. However, as he eventually reached a state where he could no longer sober up, these titles remained with their holders. He had dismissed all the former viziers who did not drink wine and appointed new ones in their place. Ilanasam, the dwarf Irdas, the priest Iduskam, the chief physician Ziza, and the second physician Pilga had all become viziers. Only the commander-in-chief, Tutasil, insisted on not drinking wine. One evening, whilst at the king's table, he had seen everyone getting tipsy and, feeling repulsed, had given up drinking. The king could not dismiss him, knowing how much he was loved throughout the land. He was somewhat wary of him. Yet, deep down, he did harbour a grudge...

One evening, they had gathered once more around the drinking table. Matters of state were now being discussed there as well. As a new clarity had dawned on their minds, the country was being governed more effectively and was progressing in every respect. Decisions could be made with courage, and great difficulties were overcome with ease.

That evening, the new vizier, Nidiba, was also present at the banquet. Having been brought from a mountain village, he was a rather rough and uncouth man. He could not find the right words for every situation; he knew neither the court's etiquette nor even the basic rules of common courtesy. Although the King knew he was like this, he had not hesitated to appoint him as vizier. This was because, for some time now, Subbiluliyuma's character had changed; he had begun to use the affairs of state as a means of personal amusement. The King was chuckling, wondering how an ox would manage to be a vizier.

As the wine flowed, heads spun and laughter rang out. Another novelty of the evening was the presence of Yamzu. He too was drinking, and as time went on, he would cast dazed glances at the king. On the table were the finest fruits, pigeon's eggs, yoghurts made from all manner of milks, roast pork and honey. Many of the king's aides were present, and servants were attending to them. Those wishing to curry favour with the king would skewer a piece of fruit they had peeled with their own hands onto the tip of a knife and hold it out to him, seeking his acceptance. Nidiba, who was clumsy, fat and a great glutton, had been so preoccupied for a long time with simply filling his belly that he had failed to notice the courtesy being shown to the king. When he finally looked up, he saw this gesture of courtesy and realised that it was his duty to do the same. He took a large, red-skinned apple from the table, peeled it and impaled it on his knife. Imitating the others, he presented it to the king:

- 'Glorious, great King,1 would you please accept this?'

Subbiluliyuma took the apple. However, Nidiba, whose movements were clumsy and inexperienced, accidentally dipped his hand into the yoghurt bowl in front of the king as he withdrew it. All the viziers, who were eager to spot every mistake the others made, had seen this. Showing alarm and regret, they each made a specific gesture. Ilanasam went even further, addressing Nidiba:

- 'Your Excellency the Vezir! You have been careless. Your hand has entered His Majesty the King's yoghurt bowl,' he admonished. Whilst Nidiba stared blankly, the king smiled and said:

- 'Never mind. The yoghurt has turned into tzatziki,' he replied.

The King used to be very serious. He never joked with anyone. However, for some time now, he had adopted a new habit of joking with everyone. As the Viziers could not object, he had taken things further, turning witticisms and banter into insults. This time, too, it was the same. A deep silence fell over the council.

Yamzu, having drunk less than anyone else, wished to preside over the council. After whispering something to the King in secret, the King was seen to smile and, looking at Ilanasam, say: "Come now, sing us a song so we may have some fun." Ilanasam rose respectfully, saluted the King, and began to recite:

A girl who awoke one evening in the vineyard
called 'Lust', A girl whose serpentine soul
pierces a new heart every day! Enough now, let
the tears shed for your sake cease! O girl,
destroyer of a thousand homes, deemed a
scourge,
Whether you flee, drown or die, you are mine! May a
veil of blood fall upon the evil that envelops the world,
O girl who faints every day in the garden called
lust! Either flee from here and take refuge
beneath a grave, Or become a captive to the
endless hatred that shakes me,
O girl whose love is wretched, yet who is herself worshipped!

As the ballad was sung, the king, having drunk a few more cups of wine, began to feel dizzy. He asked Ilanasam:

- Did you write this?

- Yes, Your Majesty!

- You've written it beautifully. Who composed the music?

- I composed that too, Your Majesty!

- Well done. That's how it should be when you're a vizier. Let me hear you read that again...

The King took a few more sips with every line, and his eyes were spinning. By the time the ballad ended, he had reached the height of his excitement. He couldn't contain himself. In a fit of passion, he hurled the wine cup in his hand at Ilanasam's head, shouting, 'Long live the Vizier!' Thankfully, the King's aim was poor. Otherwise, had the cup struck its mark, the Vizier's plight would have been most pitiful. Ilanasam had narrowly escaped danger. However, he was now preoccupied with the others. If a goblet were to be thrown at every singer, it was not inconceivable that some of them might hit their mark. Indeed, the king had now ordered Ziza to sing a ballad. She, too, began to recite, blinking her eyes which could not see well from a distance

O you whose eyes' colour shakes my very
soul! Today, black-coloured flowers have
bloomed in my heart. Should you one day ask
the winds of my heart, they will say I gave my
life for you long ago.

From the glimmers of your eyes that penetrate the very heart
Come, my love, come and offer me a cup of wine! It
has stirred my heart, which had never trembled
before; yes, it has stirred it—that dizzying spell
within you!

O tiger with eyes as sharp as daggers!
Whether you make me suffer all the torments of
love, or plunge yourself into my chest to kill
me—even if I die, my love will follow you.

It was Yamzu who listened to these songs with the utmost attention. For he sensed that both Ilanasam's and Ziza's songs revealed a love directed towards him. But the king's favourite, of course, could not deign to accept the love of the king's servants. He was now hatching a series of secret plans in his mind. Ziza, meanwhile, stood with bated breath, waiting for the bowl to fall upon her head. But this time, the king did not hurl the bowl. Turning to one of his aides, he said:

- 'Bring three thousand shekels and give them to Yamzu as a reward,' he said.

Although others had sung the song, no one could fathom the profound wisdom behind Yamzu receiving the reward. Nevertheless, they did not hesitate to approve of this action. Only Pilga did not think this was right. For if his brother Ziza had received the reward, perhaps he too would have got a share. The king could see from the frown on his face that he was displeased with the reward Yamzu had received.

- 'Pilga,' he said, 'what do you think?'

- 'Your Highness! I find this reward unwarranted. Had it remained in the treasury, it could have been put to better use.'

- 'You're a complete fool. You've no business here. Get out of here at once...'

They had been drinking from stone cups. Everyone thought themselves a hero and a giant. Pilga tried to stand up to him.

- 'Your Majesty! I am a vizier! This is a giant's banquet. It is my right to sit here!'

The King was furious; he shouted at his aides:

- 'Quickly, grab him and throw him out!'

The attendants rushed about. They grabbed Pilag from all sides, shook him once or twice, and then flung him away. The vizier, in his drunken stupor, could scarcely feel the pain. The King, however, could not contain his rage. He ordered:

- 'Take him out to the garden and dunk him in the pond fifty times. Then bring him back here!'

As the aides dragged Pilag away, the king looked at those seated at the table. They were cowering, whispering amongst themselves. From these secret whispers, only the word 'Tutaşil' had reached the king's ears. He asked Subbiluliyum with a smile:

- I wonder what Tutaşil would say if he saw this?

Ilanasam replied

- What could His Majesty possibly dare to say?

The dwarf Irdas added:

- He's a thoughtful man. He wouldn't understand these matters.

Priest Ðduskam did not wish to lag behind the others in his condemnation.

- Failing to applaud His Majesty the King's actions is contrary to the command of the gods and to custom.

Ziza concluded:

- And he doesn't even drink wine...

Just then, an aide arrived to announce that Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil wished to see the King.

The order was given: 'Let him come!'

When the commander-in-chief appeared before the king, the king was just finishing off another cup. After sizing up Tutaşil from head to toe, he said in a stern voice:

- "Look, this is what they're saying about you," he said.
- What are they saying, Your Majesty?
- They say you're scheming and acting against the law.
- They're lying, Your Majesty! I concern myself only with my duties. I do not indulge in pleasure. I do not covet anyone's wife. I do not commit immoral acts. I do not drink wine. Those who cannot stand me are the ones saying such things.

The King's eyes lit up:

- "Well done! I knew you were like this. I am just like you," he said, rising to his feet and kissing Tutaşil on the forehead. He then gave him permission to go and rest. But the other man did not move. He said:
- Your Majesty! I have come here to bring you important news. The Kaska have crossed the border; they have begun plundering our villages and killing the Hatti. What are your orders?

The King's drunkenness seemed to have worn off. After a moment's thought, he said to Tutaşil:

- "Send word to the officers everywhere. Let them take their regiments and march here at full speed.
  You, too, prepare the war chariots. Come and see me tomorrow. I shall provide the war funds," he said.

After the Commander-in-Chief had left, Ilanasam raised his cup:

- 'In honour of His Majesty the King's great victory...'

The others followed suit. So much was drunk that the viziers passed out one by one. Only Yamzu, who had drunk very little, and the king, who could hold his drink, remained. Yamzu was trying, as much as possible, to tease the king and extract a promise from him to make her queen.

Subbiluliyuma said:

- What would you do as queen? Is our love for one another not enough? You know that love is not material. Once we love one another, what value remains in kingship or queenship? Ask of me: I shall have the skin of the dwarf Irdas flayed to make you a pair of boots. Or I could have Ilânasam's eyebrows plucked and woven into a carpet. If you like, I could have Chief Physician Ziza's leg hung from a tree and have music played beneath it. But once you become queen, you'll be subject to a whole host of ceremonies. Look, the current queen can't even see me once a month...

These words did not persuade Yamzu. He said:

- My dear King! I would sacrifice everything for your sake. But I must see a token of your love for me. And that is for you to marry me. Now everyone is looking at me strangely. I hear them gossiping behind my back. If I become queen, no one will look at me askance. Yesterday I met with the Assyrian envoy. He told me, 'Your glorious king is a very rich, very powerful and heroic king. I only saw two shortcomings in him.'

Subbiluliuma leapt to his feet and asked:

- 'What are these shortcomings?'

- The envoy replied, 'I have seen your king's lions, his fighting bulls, his horses and his falcons. Despite his great wealth, I found these to be few in number. Our king has many more of these.'

Subbiluliyuma smiled again:

- 'Why didn't you say that although our king's animals are few, there are some among them that speak like humans?'

Yamzu did not understand these words. Pointing to the viziers who were slumped on the floor before the king, he said:

- 'If you'd mentioned these to the envoy, he wouldn't have been able to compare his own kings' animals with mine.'

These words pleased them so much that they burst out laughing. When the laughter had died down, the king asked:

- 'What is the second thing missing?'

- He said that the second shortcoming was that His Majesty the King had not married a pearl like Yamzu.

- Is that so? Are you a pearl?

Just as Yamzu was trying to reply with a smirk, four aides, including Pilga, entered the room. They reported that they had dunked him in and out of the palace garden pond fifty times. The Vizier was soaking wet from head to toe. He was cold and shivering. The King drank another cup of wine and said:

- 'Your Excellency the Vizier! This is how I remove those who refuse to leave my table. Let this serve as a lesson to you. I am also dismissing you from the office of vizier,' he said.

Poor Pilga was not merely dismissed. Having become thoroughly flushed from the wine, he fell ill as a result of being plunged into cold water fifty times on a chilly night. He died within two or three days.

# 9- THE ARMY MARCHES TO WAR

Thanks to Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil's tireless diligence, the army was ready for war within fifteen days. That day, they were to march past the king in Hattuşaş in a ceremonial parade before setting out against the Kaska. The king and his viziers had gathered to make their final decisions regarding the war. At first, everyone had assumed that the king would accompany the army. However, after a long, private conversation with Yamzu, he changed his mind. No one knew why the king had backed out.

The dwarf Irdas's nephew had been conscripted into the army. Irdas stood there filled with joy and pride at this great honour. At the same time, he did not forget that his nephew should be assigned to another post so that he might serve the king even more effectively. When he asked the king for permission to speak to convey this, he was filled with patriotic fervour:

- Your Majesty! Your invincible army is setting out today to crush the treacherous and savage Kaskas. Had I not already rendered greater services to you and the nation here, I too would have gone with the army and killed at least fifteen, at most one hundred and twenty mounted Kaskas, bringing their heads back here. But what can I do? My duty here is more important. Similarly, there is a young man in the army setting out for battle today whose heart burns with the fire to destroy the Kaskas. Yet this young man is such a loyal servant of yours that his presence here would be of greater benefit to you and the state. After all, what difference does it make if one person is missing or surplus to requirements within this mighty army? Whereas this young man is a master without equal in cultivating flowers. Would it not be better if, by working in the palace gardens, he were to cultivate flowers that would delight our king's heart? I humbly request that he be transferred from military service to a post in the palace gardens, with a modest monthly salary. This young man is my nephew, Nittahabas.

The King accepted his loyal vizier's request and sent one of his aides to Tutaşil, instructing him to bring the young man to the palace.

Had he spoken up, he would have said the same things for his brother-in-law, who had also been conscripted. However, he thought it would not be proper to make the same request after the dwarf Irdas had already done so. Accustomed to finding a way around everything, he approached Yamzu. He explained that, as his brother-in-law was a master at making women's boots, it was essential that the finest boots be made for him, and that this constituted a greater service to the nation than military service. Thanks to Yamzu's intervention, the king had the bootmaker discharged from the army and brought to the palace. As for Doctor Ziza, he had three sisters-in-law to look after. He saw medical and health risks in these three men going off to war. God forbid, the presence of these three sick men in the army could even lead to a rout. After explaining all this to the king in a lengthy speech, he obtained permission to have them exempted from military service.

Thus, by the time of the final meeting held to prepare the army for the campaign, everything had been settled. Sensing that any further delay would result in a significant reduction in troop numbers, the commander-in-chief, with a stern expression, had saluted the king and requested permission for the parade.

Once the King and Queen had taken their seats on their thrones in the garden, and Yamzu, the viziers and aides-de-camp had lined up around them, the band began to play martial tunes.

First, 120 war chariots passed by. Each contained three hand-picked soldiers. Next came the procession of the infantry. Five thousand infantrymen, armed with swords, shields and pikes, marched past, saluting the king and singing war songs. Next came 1,200 horsemen mounted on fine horses, advancing with their long spears. Bringing up the rear was Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil, accompanied by 60 bodyguards, carts carrying provisions and arrows, and his headquarters tent. As Tutaşil's well-dressed, hand-picked bodyguards passed before the king, they sang this song:

Hail to you, Hattuşaş! Your surroundings are all lush
and green!... We'll gouge out the eyes of any stranger
who dares to look askance!
With Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil at our head, We shall
paint the enemy's land crimson with blood!

Farewell, O Hattuşaş! Perhaps we shall not
return; Perhaps death has laid an ambush for
us along the way... March on, valiant Tutaşil,
march on, glorious warrior!
Let everyone know what the Hittite army is like...

The king's brows were furrowed because his own name was not mentioned in this ballad. The viziers had also noticed this. It was a good opportunity to bring Tutaşil down. For Tutaşil was an obstacle to many of the viziers' schemes.

Sixty guards effectively formed the backbone of the Hittite army. For these were well-trained, skilled marksmen, masters of the sword and heroic warriors, selected from the purest Hittites. The soldiers in the war chariots were not bad either. However, the infantry were rather a motley crew. Most were untrained. The cavalry, meanwhile, consisted entirely of relatives of wealthy favourites. Worse still, the infantry commander was an Assyrian, and the cavalry commander an Egyptian. Tutaşil had tried hard to dismiss them, but had been unable to persuade the king. Had he pressed the matter a little further, the king would have dismissed him and appointed one of them as commander-in-chief. For this reason, Tutaşil turned a blind eye to these foreign commanders, pinning all his hopes on his 60 bodyguards and 120 chariots.

The people of Hattusa had poured out onto the streets to watch the army. The route the army was taking passed in front of the house of the soothsayer Šilka. Šilka, together with his wife and son, was watching the procession go by, muttering to himself as he did so.

- 'Well, these chariots aren't half bad, but the wheels haven't been greased. With all this noise, they'll be announcing their presence to the Kaska from a great distance. It's clear the treasurer has embezzled the grease money. It's obvious the infantry are in a right state. That's hardly surprising. After all, the infantry commander is an Assyrian ruffian. He secured this

command. Look, my son Murya! Can you see that infantry commander's horns? He can knock ten enemies to the ground with a single blow.

Little Murya looked carefully but could see nothing resembling horns, so he asked his father:

- 'Father! Where are the commander's horns?'

- My son! Keep your eyes peeled. You can see the horns of tiny lambs, yet can't you see these horns, each as tall as two men? Yes, yes. Perhaps you can't see them. You need to grow a little to see them. These infantrymen have all been rounded up from prisoners and people of unknown lineage. Half of them will run away along the way anyway. The remaining half will be dealt with by the Kaska. Look, here come the cavalry. They did well in the previous battle against the Kaska. Back then, Tutaşil's son was in command. He was struck by four wounds and died. Let's see who their commander is now. Oh dear! Did you see what's befallen us? What I'd heard was true. That Egyptian rascal has become the cavalry commander. And what else could come of that, of course? The Egyptian's son is in cahoots with Yamzu. Yamzu used trickery to get his lover's father appointed as cavalry commander. The king, drunk on wine, is oblivious to all this. If we were to pit our king against that infantry commander, I wonder which of them would win? My son Murya! I've told you a thousand times to grow up quickly. Even though you've eaten so many apples, you still haven't grown. You can see that things won't fall into place until you've grown up… Look, here comes Tutaşil. The sole and last pillar of the Hatti state… If he dies too, it'll mean our downfall. Do you see how he's gathered around him the unadulterated Hatti heroes? My son Murya! In fifteen years' time, you'll join their ranks too.

Murya was very impressed by the soldiers. He asked his father:

- Father! Couldn't I go to war too?

- No, my son. You're still far too young. That said, you could go with him. You'd certainly be of more use than that Assyrian oaf who's the infantry commander.

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Three months had passed. As the autumn rains drenched Hattusa, news arrived that the army was about to return. After constant skirmishes, the Kaska had been defeated and driven back towards the coast, beyond the mountains.

The king had set up a new drinking table and was discussing state affairs with his viziers. New ambitions were now swirling in his mind. He wanted to conquer Assyria, Egypt and the whole world, appoint Yamzu as chief vizier, and then, by tearing down the statues of the gods, declare himself a god

. Once he began drinking, he saw everyone as small and insignificant as a fly. However, he drank too much, and as a result, he suffered from stomach pains. Teşen, who had been appointed chief physician in place of Ziza—who was now a vizier—could find no remedy for the king's ailment despite all his efforts. He told the king that if he did not drink, these pains would not occur, but the king paid no heed to this advice. The chief physician, who was always by the king's side, saw that the king had had too much wine that day and approached him respectfully. Leaning close to his ear, he said:

- 'Your Majesty! For the sake of your health, I beg you to stop drinking now.' After the king nodded in agreement, he ignored Teşen—whose mouth was stretched from ear to ear with joy and whose eyes and mouth were agape in astonishment—and said to his viziers:

- 'Viziers! The chief physician has told me that my stomach is now free of any discomfort and that I may drink as much wine as I please. So fill your goblets! Let us each drink one in honour of the chief physician.'

Whilst the wine was being drunk, an aide-de-camp entered and announced that Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil was waiting for permission to enter. The viziers frowned. The King ordered that the Commander-in-Chief be admitted.

Tutaşil looked tired and worn out. He had a large sword wound on his face. In three months, he seemed to have aged several years. After greeting the King, he looked at the drinking table and the viziers. In that gaze were condescension, disgust, revulsion and mockery. He addressed Subbiluliyum, the commander-in-chief:

- 'Welcome, Commander-in-Chief! Tell me, how did the battle go?'

Tutaşil was holding a tablet. He had written a brief account of the war on it. Glancing at the tablet, he began to recount the events to the king:

- Ten days after setting out from Hattusa, we fought our first battle. During the ten-day march, 2,000 of our 5,000 infantrymen and 200 of our 1,200 cavalrymen had deserted the army. Although I had set out from here with some 7,000 soldiers, I fought the first battle with some 4,800. As this skirmish was against the Kaska's small advance guard, it was not difficult to drive them back. However, I subsequently fought three major battles, each of which proved very costly for us. This was because the infantry commander could not control his men, and the cavalry commander paid no heed to my orders. In the first major battle, the infantry quickly broke ranks. We won this battle with our chariots. However, most of our chariots were destroyed. In the second major engagement, our cavalry fled from the Kasks. I won this battle by dismissing the infantry commander and taking command of the infantry myself. In the final major engagement, the Kasks deployed their full strength. Our chariots were exhausted. I fought this battle almost single-handedly with some 60 of my guardsmen. I was wounded in the forehead. We routed the Kasks. But we, too, were exhausted. Not a single chariot or horseman remained. All

my guards were killed in battle. I returned on foot, together with about 100 soldiers from the infantry who had not fled but had held their ground.

It was a dreadful thing for a commander who had set out with an army of 7,000 to return with just 100 men, even though he had won the battle. The King looked at the Commander-in-Chief with a blank stare and asked:

- 'Where are the commanders of the infantry and cavalry?'
- They fled towards Hattusa on the two remaining horses. I was unable to catch them and have them executed.
- 'Very well, Commander-in-Chief! I am very pleased with your service. You may now go and rest.'

As Tutaşil bowed to the king and took his leave, the drunken viziers were whispering slander against him.

## 10- THE NIGHT OF THE HEROES

The people of Hattusa were in a state of triumphant joy. Tutaşil was being celebrated everywhere as a great hero. The people rushed to the shrines, praying to the gods for Tutaşil's 60 guards and the soldiers of his 120 war chariots. They had risked their lives to save the state and secured a glorious victory for the Hatti people. The people of Hattuşaş gathered in front of the palace, shouting and crying out 'Long live the king!' in his honour. The excitement was so great that the king was compelled to emerge from the palace to appear before the people. The cheering crowd applauded the king, the queen, Tutaşil, the viziers, Yamzu and even Hantilyas, wishing the king another hundred years of life. Amidst the shouts, a voice rang out:

- 'Your Majesty! In honour of this victory, organise a night of heroes,' he shouted.

The crowd immediately rallied to the idea:

- 'Yes, yes! Let there be a night of heroes… Let the heroes be honoured… Let the victory be celebrated!'

This request was so universal and unequivocal that the King had no choice but to accept it. After gesturing with his hand to silence the crowd, he said:

- 'O great Hatti Nation! O heroic nation of the Thousand Hands of the Gods! I regard your wish as a command and accept it. For your word is the word of the gods. In three days' time, we shall celebrate the Night of Heroes. I invite you all to the banquet in the palace gardens. Please accept this invitation. For I...'

The people were no longer listening to what the king was saying. Having been invited to the feast, they were so carried away by the prospect of fine food that they had forgotten all about the king. The king, too, having realised his words were falling on deaf ears, grew angry and went inside. 'This so-called "people" is no different from a herd of oxen,' he muttered. 'When they see the hay, they no longer heed the shepherd's pipe.'

The dwarf Irdas intended to take advantage of the king's anger. Slithering like a snake, he approached:

- Your Majesty! The people are like children. They are easily swayed. Whilst the king, who is like a father to them, stands by, they might believe any stranger who is the father's enemy. I suspect it is Commander-in-Chief Tutaşil who has led this people into such insolence. For in the ballad sung by the guards, only his own name is mentioned; there is no mention of the glorious King Subbiluliyuma. Now, too, it is he who has incited the people to demand a 'Night of Heroes'. By this, he seeks to secure great honour for himself.

If I may say so, he did not wish to be outdone by the dwarf Irdas:

- Your Majesty! The Commander-in-Chief keeps proclaiming everywhere that he is of the most noble Hatti lineage and has no foreign blood in his veins. What does this mean? I suspect he has his sights set on the throne. Can there be a nobler family in Hatti than that of the king? To claim to belong to the noblest family is to say, 'I am the king' or 'I shall be the king'.

Priest Iduskam, as was his custom, replied with feigned anger:

- Your Majesty! This Tutaşil is a liar, as ever. He went to war with 7,000 soldiers and returned with 100, yet he boasts that he won the battle. This is the most ridiculous claim! How could a commander who lost so many soldiers possibly have defeated the enemy? Then he laments that he could not execute the commanders of the infantry and cavalry. You yourself appointed these commanders. To execute them would be the greatest act of disrespect towards you. Besides, the sword wound on his forehead clearly shows he took a beating in battle. To lose 7,000 soldiers against a worthless enemy like the Kaksals

is a masterpiece of incompetence.
I request that you dismiss this commander-in-chief.

Ziza was once again offering his medical opinion:

- Your Majesty! A man who does not drink the wine bestowed upon you by the gods lacks the strength granted by the gods. Tutaşil is ill because he does not drink wine. How can a sick man command the army? He is protected not by Zamana, the god of war, but by Yarris, the god of children.

Nidiba, however, found herself in a situation where she was trying to fix one thing but making another worse, and said:

- Your Majesty! Just as the frog burst trying to resemble an ox, so will this fellow called Tutaşil burst trying to resemble you. He must be dismissed immediately and replaced by someone else. What is the role of commander-in-chief, anyway? Anyone could do it. It would be better to entrust this task to one of your loyal aides-de-camp…

Whilst the viziers were speaking, the king had been drinking wine non-stop, and the warmth of the wine had gone to his head. With a bang that would have made the dwarf Ðrdas jump out of his seat, he slammed his fist down on the table, then turned to his aides and shouted:

- 'Quickly, go to Tutaşil and tell him I have dismissed him. Let him return the Commander-in-Chief's sword. Search his house as well. Bring back whatever gold or silver you find. Also inform him that I have appointed the infantry commander as Commander-in-Chief. Take the Commander-in-Chief's sword to him.'

The aides hurried off. The viziers were rejoicing, having finally weathered the greatest crisis.

Tutaşil was lying in bed at home. Apart from the sword wound on his face, he had an arrow wound in his chest. His wife and daughter were washing his wounds and trying to strengthen him by giving him milk. When the aides entered and conveyed the king's order, he responded by pointing with his hand towards the Commander-in-Chief's sword on the wall. He had neither gold nor silver. Then, once more invoking his authority as commander-in-chief, he signalled to the aides with a gesture to leave quickly and, turning his head away, made it clear that he did not wish to see them. As the aides were leaving, Sabba, who was lagging behind, looked intently at Tutaşil's servant who had opened the door for them. Then he made a movement as if to stroke her cheek. But this gesture cost him dearly. For the girl, with a strength quite unexpected given her appearance, had slapped the aide and slammed the door shut. The other aides laughed at the sight. Sabba was practically beside himself:

'What a foolish girl,' he shouted, 'it's so obvious she's the servant of that backward man. As if the world would come to an end if I'd stroked her cheek, or kissed her, or taken her in my arms? They haven't even learnt our king's customs yet.' Did I get angry at all when His Majesty took my sister into his bedchamber last night? On the contrary, I had a lovely time watching Yamzu's face flush with anger.

After the aides had carried out their duties and returned, they reported to the King and received his orders to begin preparations for the Night of Heroes straight away.

Three days passed all too quickly. The palace garden had been transformed into a feast ground. Meat was piled high as mountains, milk flowed like a lake, and wine was prepared in quantities as vast as the sea. A twenty-piece band entertained the people by playing beautiful tunes. The entire population of Hattuşaş—some ten thousand people—had more or less filled the palace garden. The people wanted to see Tutaşil at the head of the heroes to be honoured. When they saw that he had been dismissed and replaced by the commander of the infantry, they seemed taken aback for a moment. However, after listening to the king's speech, it was not difficult for them to forget everything and turn to the wine. The free wine had made the people forget both Tutaşil and the heroes. Admittedly, Tutaşil was not there. But every now and then, one of the aides would shout out, calling on the crowd to drink in honour of a hero.

First, a toast was raised to the glorious and heroic King Subbiluliyuma. Next, cups were raised to the valiant infantry commander who had vanquished the Kasks. Then, wine was poured for the viziers who had rendered valuable service in securing victory by heroically governing the realm. Meanwhile, the aide-de-camp Sabba was not forgotten either.

Whilst the people were celebrating their heroes in the garden, the king and the viziers were doing the same in the palace's grand ceremonial hall. The commander-in-chief, beaming with joy, along with Yamzu and Hantilyas, were also present there. The king said:

- 'Hantilyas is a hero. She discovered wine. She is to be preferred to Bin Tutaşil,' he said, paying her a compliment; Hantilyas smiled, radiating joy to those around her with her heart-warming beauty. She was no longer the woman of the palace who never smiled. She was the palace's jewel, its beauty, its adornment.

By midnight, most of the people in the garden had fallen asleep. For that crowd of the uninitiated had been drinking wine as if pouring it down one after the other, until they had lost all sense of themselves. In the ceremonial hall, however, the merriment was only just beginning. After every cup of wine, the King would eat a boiled magpie's egg, and this display of modesty earned him even greater love and respect from his viziers. The topic of conversation at the table was always whatever the King brought up. Now they were discussing a philosophical matter. And they were speaking with the philosopher Ilânasam. After drinking another cup, the King said:

- Philosopher! 'Abundance' and 'scarcity' are, in fact, one and the same. It is our own delusion that distinguishes them as much or little. For example, there is no difference between one cup of wine and ten cups of wine. Indeed, sometimes ten cups of wine do not have the same effect as a single cup. At other times, a single cup of wine can make a man drunk. Why is this so? Because if the delusion within us tells us we have drunk too much, we regard a single cup as too much and become drunk. If the delusion within us tells us we have drunk too little, we remain perfectly sober even after drinking ten cups. Is that not so? What do you think?

Ilanasam, being very cunning, did not immediately accept the king's idea. Because he never followed the king's lead to the letter. If the king claimed one thing one moment and the opposite the next, and if Ilanasam agreed with his own view on the first claim, the king would get angry and insult him. That's why he had to find a way round it and take a middle course. Fixing his gaze on the ground with a wicked look beneath his thick eyebrows, he replied:

- Your Majesty! Essentially, there is no difference between a little and a lot. As you have said, there is no difference between one bowl of wine and ten bowls of wine. However, I believe that in certain circumstances, there are differences between a little and a lot.

- Such as?

- For example, there must be a difference between 'a thousand'—the highest degree of abundance—and 'nothing'—the highest degree of scarcity, that is, zero. For a man who drinks a thousand bowls of wine will, after all, be somewhat affected by it. A man who drinks zero bowls of wine, however, will not be affected. Because he has not drunk any wine.

All the viziers were impressed by this splendid answer. The new commander-in-chief, in particular, even took pride in the words of his kinsman, Ilânasam. The king, too, seemed to have taken a liking to these words. After eating a magpie's egg, he posed a rather philosophical question to his vizier:

- Well then! What, then, is zero?

- For example: me, standing before you!...

It was such a brilliant answer that the dwarf Ðrdas was green with envy. The physician Ziza would have been willing to howl just to have been able to give such a reply. Only Nidiba failed to grasp the subtle wit in these words. Nor was he in a state to do so. For the more he drank, the greater his appetite grew; and the more he ate, the more he felt like drinking wine.

Although quite some time had passed, the king had said nothing. That was his custom. He tried not to show his approval. However, after a while, he turned to one of his aides and gave the order:

- 'Let the people drink in honour of Ilanasam!'

The aide went out into the garden and, striking a brass disc with a mallet, tried to rouse the people. Most were fast asleep. Some were too exhausted to even stir. Despite this, the aide shouted:

- O Hattians! Our King has commanded: You shall drink in honour of the hero Ilanasam!...

A round of applause broke out amongst those still on their feet. Shouting 'Long live the King! Long live Ilanasam!', they drank their wine.

Now, in the ceremonial hall, another topic of conversation had arisen: history was being discussed. The King was recounting past battles and former kings. He argued that to be a great king, one must win victories, conquer lands and provide for the people. He was very modest about Subbiluliuma. Of the ancient kings, he admired Flabernas and Mursili the most, but held Mursili in higher esteem. He said:

- 'I have read the lives of all the kings, both ancient and modern. Muršili is the greatest and the last of the great kings. No king equal to him has come since.'

Priest Iduskam rose to his feet with that feigned excitement:

- What are you saying, Your Majesty! King Muršili is undoubtedly a very great king. There are perhaps one or two kings like him. But in our day, there are certainly kings greater than Muršili—not just great, but far greater, and indeed many such kings.

These words nearly killed Irdasi. Whilst everyone else had spoken such fine words, he had not yet managed to say a single thing. As he swallowed nervously, Nidiba's shout was heard. For some reason, Nidiba had been well-fed and rather drunk for some time now. Seeing that Priest Iduskam was expressing an opinion contrary to the king's, she had decided that the time had come to curry favour with the king and had spoken out. She was practically shouting at Iduskam in anger:

- 'Shut up! Do you think you know better than His Majesty the King? Since he says no greater king than Muršil has ever come, then none has. Why do you keep insisting that there is a great king in our time?'

Although everyone was used to Nidiba's outbursts, this time it seemed to go beyond mere interpretation. The dwarf Irdas, lunging at Nidiba, was wondering how he could flatter him. The king's words stopped him. For the king said, smiling:

- 'It is right to judge people according to their intentions,' he said. Now no one spoke; they were merely drinking wine. Dawn was breaking. As the drink took hold of their minds, their movements, glances and words became mindless; pointless smiles and senseless outbursts of anger swept over everyone in quick succession. The king was in a state of delirium. He stood at the point between genius and madness. He suddenly raised his head, which had been slumped upon his chest. After scanning the horizon like a hero gazing upon enemy armies, he raised both hands to the level of his neck. His left hand was outstretched. After pulling his right hand back to his shoulder and miming the act of shooting an arrow, he addressed the viziers, who were staring at his mouth:

- 'I shot an arrow!... It turned into a kebab,' he said. The viziers exchanged glances and nodded in approval of this profound wisdom, this unprecedented aphorism. They had greatly admired it, yet had not understood it. The profound wisdom behind the arrow turning into a kebab was not something every commoner could grasp. The honour of solving this riddle fell to the dwarf Irdas:

- 'His Majesty, through the finest of his literary arts, has opened yet another brilliant horizon for the world and humanity,' he said, 'for if the arrow strikes a fawn and lodges in a rock, and since that rock is made of flint and catches fire, and the fawn, though pierced by the arrow, spins round fifty times due to the arrow's speed, it will undoubtedly become kebab. And the sweetest of kebabs at that...

Ziza had become so dazed that his brain was no longer functioning. That pig of a dwarf he disliked had undoubtedly found favour in the king's eyes.

With eyes that were beginning to see almost nothing due to his drunkenness, Ziza looked first at the king, then at Hantilyas, wavering between trying to curry favour with the king and declaring his love for Hantilyas. If the king were to say something easy to interpret, there'd be no problem. But what if he were to say, for example: 'I shot an arrow and it turned into halva'? Where on earth would he find the honey, flour and oil for the halva? For a moment, he felt as though he were sinking into despair, thinking he'd never be able to curry favour with the king. It was just as well he gave up on fawning over the king. He wanted to draw Hantilyas's attention to himself. But, damn it all! He was so drunk that from a few paces away he was confusing Hantilyas with Yamzu. They were sitting to the king's right and left. Yet he couldn't tell which one was Hantilyas. He might have thought to himself, 'I must have drunk far too much to be confusing Yamzu's body, which resembles a moonfish, with the other man's slender and shapely figure.' That said, the fault lay not solely with the wine. His poor eyesight had also played a part. Suddenly, as if driven by an impulse beyond his control, he stood up and said to the king:

- Your Majesty! There is one more hero who must not be forgotten on this night of heroes: Yamzu, the fairest of all women, with her bright eyes and slender figure.

Ziza cut himself off right there, just as everyone was eagerly awaiting the end of his sentence. For he was taken aback. Whilst intending to speak of Hantilyas, the name Yamzu had slipped from his lips. He was so startled that for a moment he did not know what to say. Then, after thinking to himself, 'What can we do? I've shot an arrow, and it's turned into halva. We'll just have to find the oil, the honey and the flour,' he continued:

- 'Yes! Yamzu is a hero. For someone who presides over the feast and, despite being a woman, can hold her drink so well, is undoubtedly a hero. Is drinking twenty bowls of this red wine any easier than drinking the blood of twenty enemies? It is not. Speaking as a doctor, let me tell you that it is not easier. It is harder. Therefore, after His Majesty the King, the greatest hero of this night, the second hero is Yamzu. The third hero is Hantilyas. The fourth hero is Ilânasam. The fifth hero is Irdas… No, no… I was mistaken… I shall start from the beginning: The first hero is His Majesty the King… The second hero is Yamzu… The third is Hantilyas… And the fourth is me…

Ziza could not continue. For suddenly he saw the King collapse, blood gushing from his mouth and nose. The Chief Physician, Teşen, who was standing behind the King, and Yamzu, who was sitting beside him, rushed over. The others were frozen to the spot. The chief physician was trying to drip some of the elixir of life he carried with him into the king's mouth. Dawn had broken. After massaging the king's chest and arms for a while and listening to his heart, Teşen said joyfully: 'Thank goodness, nothing has happened to our king. However, he must lie still for a few days.' He then ordered the drunken aides to carry the king on their backs to his bedchamber. In any case, there was no wine left to drink nor food to eat. The new commander-in-chief had also vanished from the battlefield.

The viziers wanted to board their chariots to return home for the investiture ceremony. However, the cowardly Tutaşil had lost all his chariots in the battle against the Kasks. There was no other option: they would have to go on foot. When they emerged into the palace gardens, they saw that the entire population had passed out and fallen asleep. Some young men who had not yet fallen asleep were in an inappropriate situation with a group of women. This sight offended Ilanasam's honour:

- 'You wretched scoundrels! Have you no shame?' he shouted. One of the drunken youths raised his head and replied:

- 'Don't be angry, Your Excellency the Vizier! We're just doing under the stars what you do under your own roof,' he replied.

The dwarf Irdas, stammering from drunkenness, grumbled:

- 'The common folk are no different from donkeys!'

Another young man replied to this:

- 'The donkey's just like you…'

Priest Đduskam was furious:

- You wretch, you traitor! How dare you speak such words to a vizier?
- Don't get so worked up! Tonight is the night of heroes. We, too, are showing our heroism by spending the night out in the open. Long live the King!..

When Ziza stepped out into the open air, he seemed to have calmed down a little:

- 'These traitors must be executed. They're showing disrespect to the palace gardens,' he shouted.

Another drunkard rose from his seat and replied:

- 'Take it easy, Your Excellency the Vezir! The King summoned us here. To have the King's guests executed is an act of rebellion against the King. Are you rebelling against the King?'

Ziza, who was already a coward, was thoroughly terrified by these words

- God forbid, God forbid!… I am the King's servant. But you have sullied the honour of the garden.
  You're forgetting that tonight is the Night of Heroes…

- What night of heroes? The heroes are dead. This is the night of the sycophants. We shouted 'Long live the King!' until dawn just to be invited to this feast. And of course, you were in there somersaulting like a clown. Long live the King!..

Nidiba's patience had run out:

- Look at me! Stop being so ungrateful. If it weren't for the King and the viziers, you'd all go hungry. The enemy would come and take you all away. They'd sell you as slaves. We are the people who carry the heaviest burdens. You're obliged to show us respect!..

At these words, the drunkard began to weep uncontrollably. Sobbing, he muttered:

- 'My donkey carries heavy loads too, yet he still gets beaten by me. How ungrateful I've been,' he muttered.

Seeing that the situation had become intractable and that there was no means at hand to exercise their official authority, the viziers walked towards the garden gate. Staggering, they made their way home.

The soothsayer Şilka had been listening to the whole conversation with a friend. After glancing first at the drunks and then at the viziers, he said:

- 'That drunkard has reduced those blokes to rags,' he said.

His friend replied:

- 'You've got it wrong. He turned the rags inside out!'

**- THE END -**

***Atsız,***

***Monday 26 May 1941***

***Maltepe***

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